

LC 174

.N26

National Education
Association of The U. S.

Committee on a national
university (appointed 1869)

LC174
• N26

No. 6.

Suggestion, invited
Chas. Linn

National education association of the United States
" Committee on a national university
(appointed 1869)

AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY.

[From the Records of the National Teachers' Association.]

At the conclusion of an address on "The Progress of University Education," delivered by Dr. J. W. Hoyt, of Wisconsin, before the National Teachers' Association, at Trenton, New Jersey, on the 20th of August, 1869, the following resolution, offered by Professor A. J. Rickoff, of Ohio, was unanimously adopted, to wit:

Resolved, That, in the opinion of this Association, a great American University is a leading want of American education, and that, in order to contribute to the early establishment of such an institution, the President of this Association, acting in concert with the President of the National Superintendents' Association, is hereby requested to appoint a committee consisting of one member from each of the States, and of which Dr. J. W. Hoyt, of Wisconsin, shall be

chairman, to take the whole matter under consideration, and to make such report thereon, at the next Annual Convention of said Associations, as shall seem to be demanded by the interests of the country.

A committee was appointed in accordance with the resolution, consisting of the following gentlemen :

Dr. J. W. Hoyt, Chairman, Madison, Wisconsin.

Hon. N. B. Cloud, Montgomery, Alabama.

Hon. Thomas Smith, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Prof. W. P. Blake, San Francisco, California.

Hon. B. G. Northrup, New Haven, Conn.

Prof. L. Coleman, Wilmington, Delaware.

Hon. C. T. Chase, Tallahassee, Florida.

Hon. Newton Bateman, Springfield, Illinois.

Hon. B. C. Hobbs, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Hon. A. S. Kissel, Des Moines, Iowa.

Hon. P. McVickar, Topeka, Kansas.

Hon. Z. T. Smith, Frankfort, Kentucky.

Hon. T. W. Conway, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Hon. Warren Johnson, Augusta, Maine.

Hon. M. A. Newell, Baltimore, Maryland.

Hon. Joseph White, Boston, Massachusetts.

Hon. O. Hosford, Lansing, Michigan.

LC 174

. N 26

MS 27 Sept. 17

University Committee.

3

Prof. W. F. Phelps, Winona, Minnesota.

Dr. Daniel Read, Columbia, Missouri.

Prof. J. M. McKinsey, Peru, Nebraska.

Hon. A. N. Fisher, Carson City, Nevada.

Hon. Amos Hardy, Concord, New Hampshire.

Hon. C. A. Apgar, Trenton, New Jersey.

Hon. J. W. Bulkley, Brooklyn, New York.

Hon. S. S. Ashley, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Prof. A. J. Rickoff, Cleveland, Ohio.

Rev. Geo. H. Atkinson, Portland, Oregon.

Hon. J. P. Wickersham, Harrisburg, Penn.

Hon. T. W. Bicknell, Providence, R. I.

Hon. J. K. Jillson, Charleston, South Carolina.

Rev. C. T. P. Bancroft, Lookout Mountain,
Tennessee.

Hon. J. S. Adams, Montpelier, Vermont.

Hon. Wm. H. Ruffin, Richmond, Virginia.

Prof. Z. Richards, Washington, D. C.

Nevertheless, in consequence of some oversight, official notice of the appointments did not reach the chairman of the committee until so near the date of the succeeding Convention that a general correspondence with the members thereof was found impracticable. Accordingly, it was very properly resolved by the committee

to make a preliminary report only at the Cleveland Convention, and leave it to the Association to determine whether they should continue their labors.

Pursuant to this decision, the chairman of the committee, on the 17th of August, 1870, submitted the following preliminary report:

PRELIMINARY REPORT.

Notwithstanding the many and various uses heretofore made of the term *university*, it may be assumed, without fear of successful contradiction, that the leading offices of a true university are these :

1. To provide the best possible facilities for the highest and most profound culture in every department of learning.

2. To provide the means of a thorough preparation for all such pursuits in life as, being based upon established scientific and philosophic principles, are entitled to rank as professions.

3. To exert a stimulating and elevating influence upon every subordinate class and grade of educational institutions, by holding up before the multitude of their pupils the standards of the highest scholarship, and by preparing for their administrative and instructional work officers and teachers of a higher grade of qualifications than would be otherwise possible.

4. To enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge, by means of the researches and investigations of its professors, as well as by the researches and investigations of other advanced minds, encouraged to a

greater activity and led to greater achievements by the influence of the university example.

In so far as any institution, whatever its name or fame, fails in the fulfillment of this general mission, by so much does it fall short of the standard of a true university.

That these several offices of the university are of vast importance is so apparent as not to require demonstration. No people can justly claim to be in the highest sense civilized whose aspiring youth are compelled to turn their backs upon the best-furnished schools of their own country, because they fail to provide the facilities elsewhere provided, and requisite to a mastery of important branches of study. No government is faithful to the interests of the people that does not, in some way, secure to them equal, and the best possible, advantages for gaining a thorough knowledge of the principles that underlie the several leading pursuits in life. No nation can possibly maintain a system of popular education worthy of a great and free people which does not place at its head an institution or class of institutions potent enough, by virtue of its own exalted character, to exert a controlling and elevating influence upon the whole series of schools of inferior rank. No people of intellectual energy and genius may hope for the approval of God and the enlightened portion of mankind which does not make its full contribution to the advancement of knowledge.

If these several declarations as to the mission of the

university, and the importance of that mission, be true, then it is a logical conclusion that no competent nation may stand acquitted before its own conscience and the enlightened judgment of the world until it can point to one such center of original investigation and educational power.

It is not deemed necessary, in this connection, by a presentation of facts so abundant on every hand, to make proof of the absolutely deplorable condition of higher education everywhere in the New World, and that we have, as yet, no near approach to a university in America—a statement which no well-informed citizen will venture to deny—a fact freely acknowledged and bewailed by the responsible heads of the very highest of all our higher institutions.

Nor do your committee deem it important to show the relative inferiority of our foremost institutions by mortifying comparisons of them with those intellectual centers, the universities of Paris, Turin, Vienna and Berlin,—themselves still incomplete in that they simply include the old faculties, regardless of the equal claims of the new professions,—each with its grand cluster of some two hundred professors, of whom many are the ablest and most brilliant men of the age, and each provided, moreover, with an array of libraries, cabinets, museums, laboratories, and other auxiliaries, of the vastness and richness of which the struggling student in the American college can have but little con-

ception. Facts upon which such comparisons might be based have long been before the country. It will soon come to be known to our people, and the sooner the better, that in respect of higher education we are about the lowest in the scale of the nations making any pretensions to civilization.

Surely further evidence is not needed of our serious, and we may add shameful, deficiency in this regard.

If it be asked whether the conditions necessary to the establishment and maintenance of a true university are found in this country, our reply is, Where else on the earth do they exist, if not here? Not in the Old World, certainly, where the existing universities, founded, many of them, during the Dark Ages, and all of them more or less in the interest of class, would be reformed with great difficulty, and only after changes should first have been wrought in the civil institutions and in the very constitution of society itself. But here in America, where only in all the world just ideas of fraternity and equality have place and are kindly cherished; where the elements of society and of all classes of institutions are yet plastic; where there are no crystalized, much less fossilized, educational systems to be overturned and got rid of; where, on the other hand, there is an open field and a hopeful groping for the right way; nay, more, where individual philanthropists and both State and National Governments are ready with vast resources, growing

vaster every day, to join in the work of laying its deep and broad foundations, what hinders that here we begin at once the upbuilding of a university commensurate with the greatness of our country and the needs of the times?

In the early history of America, the circumstances were a sufficient excuse for low standards of general and professional education. But the period of infancy and poverty has been passed. We are at this moment a rich and powerful nation. Moreover, the opinion is coming to be universal that this is a nation of great destinies. And who that looks at the democratic character of our institutions, reared as a sublime example in the face of all the doubting and jealous nations of the world; at the strange heterogeneousness of a population gathered from every clime under heaven, speaking in all the babbling tongues of earth, bound together by no common bond of historic associations, and cherishing the most diverse and conflicting views of social, religious and political institutions; at the undeveloped resources of a territory already vast, and yet increasing with a rapidity that promises, within the lifetime of the coming generation, to embrace the entire continent; at the unparalled activity and resistless energy of this wonderful mosaic of peoples, destined, ere the close of this century, to number one hundred millions;—who that looks at all these conditions of national life can resist the convic-

tion that we have indeed a sublime mission to fulfill, and that we have need even now of a keener and more far-seeing intelligence; of a profounder knowledge of the sciences, material, intellectual, social and political; of a more substantial, all-pervading virtue; in short, of a deeper, higher, and more comprehensive culture than the world has hitherto seen, or even recognized as essential to any of the other great nations, past or present?

Language is powerless to convey an adequate idea of the rapidity with which the thoughts, tendencies and purposes of the American people are all the while forming, changing and shifting, to adapt themselves to new exigencies. The very elements, social and political, are in a ceaseless ferment. Circumstances and conditions which the most sagacious fail to anticipate are daily arising to test the intellectual power and conscience of the nation. We repeat it, no nation had ever such need of disciplined mind to lead in the development of its resources and guide its intellectual energies; none such need of moral power to correct its necessarily strong material tendencies, and steadily hold it up to a noble and lofty ideal.

If, therefore, it is in truth, as we have assumed, one important office of the university to supply such discipline and such correcting and elevating power, what stronger argument could be framed for the founding and liberal sustaining of one such institution in this

country, high enough in range to meet the demands of the most exalted ambition, and broad enough to answer the needs of every profession?

We could hardly hope for more than one, at least for a long time to come, for it must needs be supplied with a multitude of able professors, covering not only the whole range of letters, pure science and philosophy, together with the several fields of the time-honored professions, but also the yet more numerous and, for a time, more difficult ones of the new professions; a great and choice library, such as this country does not yet possess; and a large number of thoroughly furnished laboratories, museums and other costly scientific establishments. But then one such university in America would at once become a power, influential alike in furthering and directing our material development, in elevating the character of the lower educational institutions of the country, and in awakening and sustaining higher conceptions of both individual and national culture; thus helping us, by a happy combination of our own more than Roman energy and religious faith with the grace and refinement of the Greek civilization, to become a nation fully worthy of the future that awaits us.

It would do more, vastly more than this. It would supply to all lands a most important need of the times—a university placed under the benign influence of free civil and religious institutions, and sublimely dedicated

to the diffusion and advancement of all knowledge. Students of high aspirations, and even ripe scholars of genius, would eventually flock to its halls from every quarter of the globe, adding to the intellectual wealth of the nation should they remain, or bearing with them scions from the tree of liberty for planting in their native lands. And thus America, already the most marvelous theater of material activities, would early become the world's recognized center of intellectual culture as well as of moral and political power.

It is not assumed that this ideal is capable of realization in a single year, nor in ten years; for, if the pecuniary means were at hand, the maturing of wise plans, the preparation of teachers through protracted foreign study, and the labor of organization and material establishment would require at least one decade. It would be a glorious consummation if on the one hundredth anniversary of our national independence it should be even permitted us to announce to the world that the first great steps insuring the early establishment of the long-hoped-for American University had already been taken. The ideal here presented in rude outline, or some other more perfect ideal, *is* capable of realization; and, in the things of intellectual culture and social advancement, whatsoever is possible, that it is the moral duty of the individual, society, or the Government, or these several forces combined, to undertake.

Whether the institution contemplated should be an entirely new one, founded in a new place, or whether some one of the few institutions that have already made such noble beginnings of high educational work should rather be made the nucleus around which the earnest friends of university education of every section should rally for its upbuilding; whether it should be what the Italians mean by a *free* university, or whether the Government, State or National, should have part in its management—these are questions upon which there must necessarily be differences of opinion.

But be the diversity of views as to the precise character of the institution, the place of its location, and the mode of its constitution and government, what it may, upon the primary question of whether we will have a *university* in America *somewhere*, and at the earliest possible day, there should be no difference of opinion.

There is one other question, moreover, that may be settled now. It may be safely assumed in advance, that the founding and endowing of the institution is a work in which it will be necessary for the citizen, the State and the General Government to unite; for it will cost millions of money, and require the careful guidance of the wisest scholars and statesmen the land can afford. And who doubts that all these forces—the people, the State, and the National Government—will respond if the scholars, the active laborers in the

cause of education, and the leading statesmen of the country, with one voice demand it?

When, a few years since, the men of *work* asked help of the nation for the endowment of schools for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts, the Government, with a liberal hand, gave for this noble object ten million acres of the public domain, to which the individual States and great-hearted men have added no less liberal means. How much more then, proportionally, will our statesmen in council and liberal patriots yield for the foundation and maintenance of *one* great central institution, to be established in the interest of every profession and all classes of schools, of a profound and universal culture, of a more perfect intellectual and social development of the whole body of the nation, in the interest of liberty and universal man!

In the opinion of your committee, the attention of the Association has not been called to this subject a moment too soon. The trial of its political institutions through which the American nation has just passed; the manner in which the necessity for education, as the only guarantee for the perpetuity of those institutions, has just been burned into the national consciousness; the pressing demand made by our material and social condition for the best educational facilities the world can furnish; and the fast accumulating evidence that America is surely destined to a glorious

leadership in the grand march of the nations—all these constitute an appeal to action which it were criminal to disregard. The necessity is great. The country and the times are ripe for the undertaking.

The questions that remain for our discussion relate to the very important subject of definite ways and means. For the proper consideration and satisfactory solution of these, your committee have found it necessary to pray for an extension of the time allotted them.

Respectfully submitted.

J. W. HOYT, *Chairman.*

In compliance with the request of the committee, further time was granted, in the hope that at the next Annual Convention they will be enabled to submit a plan for an organized movement looking to the early establishment of some such institution as the one foreshadowed in their preliminary report.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 479 546 7

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 479 546 7



Hollinger
pH 8.5
Mill Run F03-2193